

**XXVII. *Some Observations concerning the Virtue of the Jelly of Black Currants, in curing Inflammations in the Throat.* By Henry Baker, F. R. S.**

**S**INCE Providence has been pleased to bestow certain medicinal Virtues on many Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals, which, in particular Cases, may be highly serviceable to the Health of Mankind; when such Virtues are happily discovered, they should be made as generally known as possible, that all may partake the Benefit.

No farther Apology need be offered to this illustrious SOCIETY, for communicating a short Account of the speedy Relief myself and many others have frequently received, in a very troublesome and often dangerous Disorder, by the particular Virtue and Efficacy of a Shrub, well known amongst us, though commonly but little regarded.

From my Childhood, till within about Twelve Years past, I used, almost constantly, upon taking Cold, to be seized immediately with an Inflammation in the Throat, attended with great Swelling, Throbbing and Soreness: And notwithstanding Bleeding and Purging, together with the Assistance of Gargles, Linctus's, and all the other Methods generally made use of in such Cases, it most commonly would take its Course; that is, in about a Week or Ten Days time, it would suppurate and break, a considerable Quantity of fetid Matter would be discharged, and then I soon recovered.—During its Continuance, I

was

was unable to swallow any thing but warm Liquids, and even those not without much Difficulty and Pain; but upon its breaking I found immediate Ease.

This Disorder attacking me Five or Six times a Year, and sometimes oftener, afforded but too frequent Opportunities of experiencing, that all the common Methods did me no Good at all; but, on the contrary, made my Uneasiness last the longer, by retarding the Suppuration: Which often determined me to leave it wholly to Nature, with the Assistance only of warm Broths and Gruels.

But, about Twelve Years ago, I became acquainted with a learned and ingenious Clergyman, the Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr. *Washbourne*, Vicar of *Edmonton*, and one of the Canons of *St. Paul's*; who told me, that from many Experiments on himself and others, scarce ever failing of Success, he could almost assure me of a certain Cure, if, as soon as ever I should perceive any Swelling or Soreness in the Throat begin, I would swallow, leisurely, a small Quantity of the Juice of *Black Currants* \* made into a Jelly; or, if the Jelly could

\* *Ribes nigrum*, Raii Hist. Plant. Vol. II. p. 1486. SQUINANCY BERRIES: *Anginæ utiles* [baccas] esse nomen Anglicum arguit.

Dale in Pharmacologia sua in 4to. p. 293. (ait) *Ribes nigra* in angina commendatur.

*John Aubrey*, Esq; F. R. S. in his Miscellanies, printed at London, 1721. in 8vo. p. 63. says, that a Gentlewoman had her fore Throat cured by a Pultef of *Blue Currants*.

The Efficacy of the Jelly of *Black Currants*, in curing fore Throats, has been long known among several good Women, who give away Medicines in the Country; yet it has been hitherto so overlooked by Physicians, as not to be ordered to be kept in the Apothecaries Shops; and even the Rob or Jelly of *Elder-berries*, which comes up to this next in Virtue, although ordered, is kept but in few Shops. C. M.

not be got, a Decoction of the Leaves in Milk, or even of the Bark (if it should happen in Winter), used by the way of Gargle, would prove, he said, a Specific for all inflammatory Disorders of the Throat.

Though I had no great Faith, I resolved to try this easy Remedy: And, as soon as *Black Currants* could be got, caused a Quantity of their Jelly to be made: Nor was an Occasion of trying it long wanting, when, to my great Surprise and Joy, I found its Effect beyond any thing I could imagine; for in Two or Three Hours the Inflammation and Swelling intirely vanished, and my Throat remained as easy as if nothing at all had happened.

From that time till very lately, for a Dozen Years together, this Medicine has never failed me once: But has, on numberless Trials, taken away this Disorder from me in a few Hours. It has likewise had the same good Effect on many of my Friends, to whom I have at different times recommended it, so that several of them are never now without it in their Houses.

But a Disappointment I lately imagined I had met with from this Medicine, is the Reason of my laying before you the following Fact.

Upon taking Cold, about Ten Weeks ago, I was seized with an Inflammation in my Throat, attended with Soreness, and throbbing Pain; on which I applied to my old Remedy, but without the usual Success; for though I took it several times a Day, for Two or Three Days together, the Disorder grew continually worse, and the Left Side of my Throat was so violently inflamed and painful, and swelled to such a Degree, that I was not able to swallow even Liquids

quids without abundance of Trouble. In short, it exactly resembled the sore Throats I used to be afflicted with before my Knowledge of this Medicine; and therefore I gave it up to take the same Course it was accustomed to do formerly.

After about a Week, when I had good Reason to believe there was a considerable Collection of Matter, and I expected it every Hour to break, I was called by Business to a Relation's House at *Tottenham*, in *Middlesex*; where, being scarce able to get down a single Dish of Tea, my Friends (who have been long acquainted with the Virtues of *Black Currant Jelly*) inquired wherefore I had not applied to my usual Remedy: I told them, that I had, but to no purpose at all; which I knew not how to account for, unless, mine being above Two Years old, Time had destroyed its Virtue. They said, they had lately made some; and immediately fetched a Glass of it, which they persuaded me to make use of.—I took Three or Four Spoonfuls of it, rather through Civility, than from any Hope of its doing Good, at a time when I every Moment expected and wished it to break.

In about an Hour's time, as I sat by the Fire-side, I perceived a sort of disagreeable putrid Smell, which I did not mind at first, supposing it something accidental: But, finding a Continuance or rather an Increase of it, I began to examine what it might be owing to; and was convinced, after I had changed my Place, that it proceeded from myself, and was really the Smell of my own Perspiration, which I found so much increased, as to become almost a Sweat. At the same time, fancying my Throat a little easier, I took some more of the Jelly.

I came to *Tottenham* about Five in the Afternoon, and began with the Jelly about Six. At Supper I with some Difficulty got down a little Gruel; and when I went to-bed, drank some Linseed-tea, sweetened with Syrup of Mulberries.—I soon got to sleep; but, waking after some Hours, found myself in a gentle breathing Sweat, attended with the same unpleasant putrid Smell. The Swelling in my Throat was, however, sensibly diminished, and the Soreness much abated: At which being rejoiced, I took a Mouthful of the Jelly that stood by my Bedside, and composed myself to sleep again. A gentle Sweat continued during the whole Night; and, in the Morning, the Swelling, to my great Amazement, was quite reduced, and the Soreness so inconsiderable, that about Ten o’Clock I eat some Toast with Chocolate, and by Dinner-time had no more Remains of any Disorder than if it had never been.

I am very certain the Swelling was not discharged by breaking; for had it broke, even in my Sleep, I must have found some ill Taste in my Mouth at waking: Whereas I was not sensible of any disagreeable Taste at all, but the Smell before-mentioned was greatly offensive to me, whenever I put my Nose into the Bed.

During the whole Time I have been speaking of, that is, for about Seventeen Hours, I made Water but once only, and then in a small Quantity: The Colour of it was very high, and it soon threw down an exceeding thick Sediment, as did all I made for Two Days afterwards, though gradually clearing up more and more.

I shall not presume to offer any Opinion as to the Manner this Medicine operates, but leave it to be considered by more proper Judges; only permit me to observe, that were the Virtues of Simples diligently inquired into, we might perhaps discover more ready and certain Cures for some Distempers than what we know at present. The barbarous *Negroes*; merely by Trials and Observations, have been able to find out both Poisons and Counterpoisons, on which (if our Accounts of them be true) they can depend with Certainty: And we know, that the Savages in *America* have discovered by the same Means, and generously taught us, the medicinal Effects of their *Ipecacuanha*, *Contrayerva*, *Peruvian Bark*, and some other Simples, which are almost infallible in curing the Disorders of the Climate where they grow: Nor is it improbable, that every Country may produce Remedies for the Diseases of its Natives.

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